

Extracts from my Diary regarding a visit to Kharakpúr, in the District of Munger (Monghyr), and several places in the Banka Sub-Division, (Bhágalpúr).—By BABU RASHBIHARI BOSE, Sub-Divisional Officer, Banka, Bhagulpore.

I. *A visit to Kharakpúr.*

Friday, the 17th Dec., 1869.—On my way paid a visit to the celebrated Masjid of Lakkhupúr, which is held in great veneration by both the Hindús and Muhammadans of the surrounding villages. It is called Chandan Sháh Auliá after the name of the founder. This Muhammadan Pír, or saint, is said to have performed many miracles. One day after rubbing his teeth with a twig of the Mukh-Chandan tree, he stuck the twig into the earth, and commanded a tree to spring up from it, when the twig shot forth branches, and grew into a tree.* The tree, which is believed to be immortal, is still shown to the spectators, and is inclosed within the walls which contain the mortal remains of the saint. The maulawí in charge of the masjid pointed out to me the original extinct trunk, from which the present tree has sprung,—the tree thus possessing the virtue of renewing itself.

It is the miracle of the tree which appears to have given name to the saint, his real name being Hájí Harban.

The saint is said to have predicted the conversion of the then Hindú Rájá of Kharakpúr,† and to have contributed in some degree to his future greatness. It is said that the Rájá, then a fugitive from his guddee, dreamed one night that he had taken beef. Being shocked at this idea, so repugnant to the feelings of a Hindú, he repaired to all the pandits in the neighbourhood. They one and all, of course, enjoined some religious observances by way of penance, which he was not then in a position to perform. At last he came to the Hájí, and told him what weighed so heavily on his conscience. The Hájí assured

* I heard this identical legend related at Kabír-Bar, on the banks of the Nerbudda, regarding the famous tree of that name.

† Regarding the history of the Kharakpúr Rájás during the Mughul Period, *vide* Mr. Blochmann's remarks in Proceedings, As. Soc. Bengal, for 1870, pp. 305 to 307, and my letter published in the Proceedings for May, 1871.

him that in a few years he would be converted to Islám, and become a great Rájá. He continued, however, to wage a hopeless contest, and was at last betrayed by his Díwán into the hands of his enemies, who carried him a prisoner to Delhi. While every moment expecting to meet an ignominious death, the daughter of the emperor happened to cast her eyes upon him, and expressed to her father a desire to be married to him. The emperor consented, the Rájá preferred his life to his religion, the marriage was celebrated with great pomp, and the Rájá was restored to his guddee. The emperor granted his daughter as dowry the pergunah Havelí (meaning house) for her residence, the parganah Kajlá for 'kajul' (a preparation worn by women on their eyes), the parganah Lahata for 'lahtí' (lac bangles), and the parganah Singol for 'sindúr' (worn on the forehead).

The Rájá who was thus restored to the *ráj* with the emperor's daughter as his spouse, was named Toral Mal,* son of Sangrám Sháh, the founder of Kharakpúr.

Sunday, the 19th December, 1869.—On the way, I saw in an uninhabited plain, near Jalálábád, a large image cut in stone, which is held in great veneration by the Hindús. It has no resemblance with any of the Hindú deities, and is called Bun-Bhokranáth, —a name which none of them bears. The group of figures cut in stone seemed evidently to be Buddhistic; but the idolatrous and religious Hindú, who seeks his god among stocks and stones, has converted the principal image into an object of worship, simply because he could not explain how and whence it came there. Nearly all the images have their noses cut off, a piece of service for which they are no doubt indebted to the fanatical and idol-hating Muhammadans. As the Muhammadans do not appear to have disfigured images except such as were held in great veneration by their Hindú or Buddhist brothers, the image in question must at one time have formed part of a great temple.

The officiating priest who was as ignorant as any man regarding the history and origin of the image, showed us a figure in the group half hidden under the earth, which he said had appeared of late, but did not exist before,—a statement which his neighbours

* Toral Mal, after his conversion, appears to have been called Rozafzún.

were glad to corroborate. He further informed us that the principal image perspired profusely during the hot weather. But what attracted us most, was the image of a Hindú goddess cut in a separate piece of stone which contained an inscription; but the letters were so illegible, that we were not able to make out whether they were Nágari or Bangáli characters—much less to ascertain the purport of the whole.*

I reached Kharakpúr at about 3-30 p. m., and visited the three-domed masjid so beautifully situated on the river Mán. The marble slab on it shows that it was built in A. H. 1067, during the reign of the emperor Sháh Jahán.

A few yards from the mosque, is the old palace of Rája Beroj [Bihruz] in ruins, where all his successors, however, continued to be invested with the insignia of royalty, as the spot was considered auspicious owing to an occurrence similar to the one that led to the foundation of Rome. It is said that Sangrám Sháh, grandfather of Beroj, having conquered 52 Khetauri Rájas who held sway in different parts of the country, came to the bank of the river Mán, in order to select a site for his capital. Suddenly a hare was seen to start from the neighbouring thicket. It was pursued by a dog, but the hare turned upon its pursuer, and killed the hound. The spot where this took place, was chosen by the warrior chief as site for his capital, and in commemoration of the wonderful occurrence, was called Khorágpúr (now written Kharakpúr), from *khargosh*, a hare. It is necessary to state that some deduce the name of the town from Kharga Singh, who is said to have completed the subjection of the country conquered by his brother Sangrám Sháh.

The authenticity of the above legend is, however, universally admitted.

Monday, the 20th December, 1869.—Left Kharakpúr at 3 A. M. for Pánchkumár, and at dawn reached Músakhol, or mouse's hole. This is a small room about four feet by three, hewn into the solid rock, like the caves of Khondgiri near Bhubanessur in the district of Púri, probably by Buddhist ascetics, whose

* The inscription, rubbings from which were subsequently sent to the Society, has been deciphered by Babu Rájendra Lála Mitra. It contains the well known Buddhist creed 'ye dharmá hetu, &c.' The character is the Kutila of the 10th century.

custom it was to retire to such places for contemplation and prayer. The people of the surrounding country believe that the hole used formerly to discharge household utensils of brass and bell-metal on the application of travellers who passed along the road by the side of which it is situated. The traveller had to call at the foot of the hole, and ask for any utensil which he had need of for the day, and instantly the article came gliding down to his hand. After his need was satisfied, he had to place the utensil in the hole, and go away. But a covetous Brahman having broken this rule, and carried away to his house a beautiful bell-metal cup he had thus received, the hole from that day ceased to lend any more utensils.

It is said that latterly the fugitive Rájá of Kharakpúr, when pursued by his Muhammadan enemies, took refuge in this hole with a few faithful followers. The hole is believed to be very spacious and almost interminable; for it was through this subterranean passage that the Rájá was often seen to issue out at Bhím-band, a distance of more than twelve miles. There is a common saying still repeated by the people to the effect that hundred drums and hundred tomtoms, if beaten at one end of the hole, do not make a sound loud enough to reach the other. But the passage is now obstructed by loose stones from the hill having fallen down at the mouth, which my guide said, accounted for my not seeing a passage beyond the small room above mentioned, except a small hole just large enough to allow my hand to pass through it.

About half a mile farther west, our guide showed us a spot where rice is said to be found in large quantities under the earth; but on digging the ground with a club, we could get only minute pieces of stone in shape of rice, which our guide, however, persisted in holding, was burnt rice. As it was still dark, I thought it proper to proceed on our journey, proposing to examine the spot on our way back. But unfortunately, I returned by a different route.

I reached Pánchkumár at 7 A. M. About a hundred yards from the foot of the hill, there is a small brick house standing in the clasp of a banyan tree, which by throwing roots around and within the structure, has helped to prolong its existence and thereby to preserve the memory of the suttee, to commemorate which it

was built; for it was here that the Rání of the fugitive Rája sacrificed herself on hearing that her husband had been taken a prisoner to Delhi, and there put to death. This last item of news appears to have been false; for as I have already observed, the Rája after all was not put to death as he had expected, but was converted to Islám and made to marry the emperor's daughter. The five daughters who had taken refuge in the hill above, were pursued by the cruel enemies for the sake of their beauty; but, like the Rájput maidens of old, preferring their honor to their lives, they leaped from the precipice into the frightful gorge of the hill below, and there met a watery grave. It is this circumstance which has given name to the hill,—‘Pánchkumárí,’ or the ‘five virgins.’

The hill, which is the source of the *Mán*, is famous for a waterfall during the rains. In the cold season, the water only trickles down its side from a height of about twenty feet from the ground, but the prospect is a very beautiful one. Having, however, all along expected a grand waterfall from a great height, we were naturally disappointed. But our guide told us that the great waterfall which has made the place famous, existed over the top of the hill, where we might also see the tremendous gorge in which the five virgins sacrificed their lives. We accordingly ascended the hill, though by one of the steepest and most difficult passages, instead of taking the easy, but circuitous, route. As we reached the top, exhausted and panting for breath, our guide pointed out to us a miniature intrenchment of stone, said to have been thrown up by the Rája before taking refuge in Músakhol, when, driven from his guddee, he made preparations for defending himself and his family at this last stronghold with his handful of troops. But to have a view of the Panchkumar as well as of the waterfall, we were required to follow the course of the stream as it leaped down from precipice to precipice till it was lost amidst the waters of the *Mán*. To descend so great a declivity was no easy task. We were all obliged not only to doff our shoes, that we might not miss our footsteps, but also to crawl on all fours for more than half an hour. In this condition we trudged on our way to the base of the great waterfall overlooking a height

of about 60 or 70 feet. A column of water from so great a height swelled by the water of the preceding smaller waterfalls, must during the rains present a sight at once picturesque and grand. We observed some huge pieces of stones torn by it from the side of the hill and lying about the basin into which the water falls. Afterwards we proceeded to the brink of the precipice from which the five virgins are said to have thrown themselves into the chasm below.

About half a mile west of Panchkumar, stands another hill at the foot of which are the Kaldaha and Maldaha, two deep basins of water in the bed of the Mán. In the former a mysterious iron chain is said to hang from the sides of the hill, the object of which is not known. The upper end of this chain is fixed to the rock, and the lower is supposed to support some thing mysterious, which no strength has yet been able to lift out of the water. We could not see the chain, as even the upper end is not visible till the water subsides considerably in March or April.

About half a mile from the Kaldaha, may be seen the river Haha, as it glides down the hill on which it takes its rise. This place is well known for a species of fish called 'Khajur,' which is said to live almost solely on milk, and is considered very delicious. The inhabitants in the neighbourhood own large herds of buffaloes, and as these animals delight in lying in the water for hours, the Khajur has no difficulty in finding the food on which it subsists. The fishes are occasionally seen hanging by the teats of the buffaloes, if the latter happen to rise suddenly from the water.

When wishing to catch these fishes, the natives drive herds of buffaloes into the water and then throw a net near them. The Khajur is not found anywhere else.

II.

On various places situated in Sub-Division Banka, Bhágalpúr.

23rd August, 1869.—The following legend is related regarding the origin of Somokhia, a place about six miles north-west of Banka. The founder of the Ghatwál family of the place, named Gautam Panday, was employed as astrologer to the